

Brussels, 23 October 2007

Commission wants to strengthen the role of Eurojust in the fight against organised crime and terrorism.

The European Commission has approved a Communication on the role of Eurojust and the European Judicial Network in the context of the fight against organised crime and terrorism. The Communication sets out the Commission's views on possible improvements. It will be discussed with Member States at a Seminar in Lisbon 29 and 30 October 2007.

Vice-President Franco Frattini, Commissioner responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, pointed out that *"The fight against transnational organised crime and terrorism cannot be fought by the Member States individually. Cooperation is an absolute necessity and figures show that Member States rely more and more on Eurojust when investigating and prosecuting these types of serious crime. Improvements are needed in order to provide Eurojust with the powers necessary to fulfil its tasks and act more effectively in the fight against organised crime and terrorism. To this end, I have indicated several possibilities for the development of Eurojust in the Communication adopted today"*.

Eurojust's aim is to stimulate and improve coordination and cooperation between the national judicial authorities in the Member States in the fight against transnational organised crime and terrorism. It started its work in 2002 and the number of registered cases is growing exponentially. In 2006, 771 cases were registered, which represents an increase of 31% compared to 2005. This year, over 800 cases have already been registered. This number may even reach 1000 cases by the end of the year.

The Communication includes an overview of Member States' implementation of the Eurojust Decision of 2002. Vice-President Frattini pointed out that *"Member States have implemented the Decision very differently. I notice substantial differences in the powers that Member States have attributed to their national members and, for example, the duration of their mandate. I believe that aligning these powers is necessary to guarantee continuity and to ensure that Eurojust can work as efficient as possible in the fight against organised crime and terrorism"*.

In order to provide Eurojust with all relevant information necessary to carry out its tasks, different options are presented in the Communication. This might imply for example that Member States spontaneously supply information in cases of serious crime where two or more Member States are involved. Closer involvement of Eurojust in joint investigation teams may also contribute to the success of these teams. Furthermore, the Commission believes that liaison between Eurojust and the European Judicial Network is to be improved, as the latter has similar objectives as Eurojust.

The Communication will be discussed with Member States at a seminar in Lisbon 29 and 20 October, organised by the Portuguese Presidency and Eurojust. On the basis of the outcome of this seminar, a legislative proposal amending the Eurojust Decision will be put forward in 2008.

To find out more about Vice-President Frattini's work please visit his website: http://www.ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/frattini/index_en.htm